

# count me in too community summary

## Mental health & LGBT lives

The Count Me In Too Mental Health report explores the experiences and opinions of LGBT people who reported that, during the last five years, they had experienced difficulties with **depression, anxiety, significant emotional distress, suicidal thoughts, panic attacks, problem eating, fears/phobias, addictions/ dependencies, anger management, and/or self harm**. These respondents were asked questions about their mental health difficulties within the last five years, regardless of whether they have received a diagnosis or used mental health services.

Historically LGBT practices and identities have been seen as psychological abnormalities. This study once again shows that mental health difficulties are not caused by LGBT identities, but mental health difficulties can result from the discrimination that LGBT people experience.

'Mental health is a huge issue for the community I think, because you grow up in a heterosexual society then, you know, that's going to have some mental health ramifications basically'

**Being an LGBT person with mental health difficulties can result in multiple issues of marginalisation** which include discrimination, prejudice and isolation from LGBT people, networks and spaces. Chapter 1 of the findings report explores this issue in more detail.

Almost one in five respondents described their mental and emotional health as poor or very poor over the last twelve months, and only one fifth of respondents had **NOT** experienced difficulties with one or more of these issues in the past five years. Of

these 643 respondents, 46% stated that their mental health had been good/very good in the past year. This illustrates how experiences of mental health difficulties can change over time. The details of this are in chapter 2.

People of other more marginalised identities more frequently reported experiencing mental health difficulties, including bisexual-, queer-, trans- and black and minority ethnic people, those who feel isolated, and those on a low income. Chapter 4 gives more information about differences between LGBT people and experiences of mental health difficulties.

**Almost a quarter of respondents say that they have had serious suicidal thoughts.**

'I might act... you know, look alright, but deep down I'm not. I'm actually... very suicidal, but not that suicidal to actually do anything.'

7% of respondents had attempted suicide in the past five years. Identity groups that are more likely to have had suicidal thoughts and attempted suicide include bisexual-, queer- and trans people, disabled people and those living with a long-term health impairment, isolated people, young people and those on a low income. In chapter 3 you can read more about suicide and suicidal distress.

**LGBT people with mental health difficulties are more likely to have experienced teasing, bullying, harassment and/or physical violence than other LGBT people.**

'When you start talking to people and you explain to them that you've got a mental health, they seem to disappear. You are classed as a nutter, as soon as you say you've got a mental health problem, oh you're a nutter'

More than a third of people with mental health difficulties said that they had been discriminated against by/within the LGBT community. Chapter 10 includes a full discussion of safety issues.

The research indicates that feeling isolated is a key issue for some LGBT people and that there is a link between multiple marginalisation and feelings of isolation. Respondents noted the role of the LGBT commercial scene in creating and maintaining feelings of isolation from some people (see more in chapter 6).

'Isolation is a massive factor and most people with mental health problems suffer isolation at some time and I have. If on top of being mentally ill and isolated, or depressed and isolated, you're also LGBT and you only feel safe in certain spaces, that's exacerbated. If the LGBT spaces don't feel safe to you, you can find yourself with nowhere to go'.

While two thirds of people who use NHS mental health services rate them as good/very good, 42% rate them as poor or very poor and almost a third of people with mental health difficulties could not find the support they needed.

'I'd love there to be a refuge in Brighton that you can go to when you are feeling shit'

Respondents said that long waiting times, and a lack of understanding of mental health issues experienced by LGBT people, impact on the effectiveness of support from services. People who have thought about and attempted suicide in the past 5 years, and people who have experienced particular mental health difficulties more frequently say that council and public services are not LGBT friendly. They are also more likely to feel excluded from mainstream services. Chapter 11 of the report discusses in depth the experiences LGBT people with mental health difficulties have with services.

#### The analysis group recommended that:

- LGBT-specific mental health work is extended,
- Statutory mental health services improve the extent to which their services are welcoming to LGBT people
- Specific work is undertaken focusing on prevention of suicide by LGBT people,
- Training for staff and monitoring of use of services by LGBT people are put in place to support change,
- Further research is undertaken exploring themes identified in this research.

To find out more details about the results of the research and recommendations (including about domestic violence and abuse, chapter 5; general health, chapter 8; managing mental health difficulties, chapter 7; and housing, chapter 9), the full report can be downloaded for free from:

[www.countmeintoo.co.uk](http://www.countmeintoo.co.uk)